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ABSTRACT

In September 1994, the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education issued standards for the State Postsecondary Reporting Entity (SPRE). To comply with these standards, New Mexico State University-Alamogordo (NMSU-A) decided to use its integrated Assessment and Strategic Planning (IASP) process, developed during a pre-accreditation self-study in 1993. In developing the IASP, the college decided that planning and assessment should be closely based on its mission and purpose statements, while the design and implementation of the IASP included faculty, staff, and student involvement. Since its original implementation, the IASP has led to revisions of syllabi and course content, more effective counseling services for at risk students, reallocation of campus financial resources, and greater attention towards issues related to the Americans with Disabilities and Student Right to Know and Campus Security Acts. To respond to the new SPRE standards, the IASP committee developed the SPRE Compliance Matrix, listing significant outcomes and accountabilit measures associated with external entities. The matrix has se ved as the basis for developing outcomes assessment data instruments, research questions, implementation schedules, and operating procedures. The IASP process has proven to be very effective in driving positive change at NMSU-A. (The SPRE Compliance Matrix is appended.) (TGI)

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SPRE and the NMSU-A Integrated Assessment and Strategic Planning (IASP) Process: What We've Learned and Where We're Going

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SPRE and the NMSU-A Integrated Assessment and Strategic Planning (IASP) Process: What We've Learned and Where We're Going

Discussion

The New Mexico Commission on Higher Education issued ***Final Draft Standards for SPRE*** in September 1994. Since then, NMSU-Alamogordo, a 2300 headcount branch community college of New Mexico State University has actively developed SPRE implementation strategies. We feel that the three-year old Integrated Assessment and Strategic Planning (IASP) process is the best vehicle to comply with pending SPRE standards. IASP was developed during our NCA self-study. We are faced with multiple requirements of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act, the 1992 amendments to the Higher Education Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Amendments of 1990 (Public Law 101-392), and other external sources. They and our own desire to assess and improve program offerings and student learning propel our continued assessment efforts. The operation of IASP is described in the 1994 edition of ***A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement*** (Leas & Lillibridge, 1994). This paper reports how we changed IASP and how well it works after three years of operation. It will feature the progress we have made using IASP to comply with SPRE and other accountability standards.

How We Assess Student Academic Achievement

Classroom assessment and classroom research as advocated by K. Patricia Cross and Thomas Angelo is a significant element of our assessment efforts. The assessment of student performance is done at the faculty level. Faculty members each do at least one assessment project every year. Examples of these projects are reported in ***Student Academic Achievement: Report***

to the Provost (Leas, 1993). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness supports faculty assessment projects with technical assistance. The faculty member is responsible for the development of research questions and project design. Technical assistance includes help with study design, statistics, computer analysis, and general advice about establishing valid ways to find out how our students are performing. This research includes student surveys, alumni surveys, test item analysis, and extensive longitudinal retention and persistence studies. An important assessment tool is student performance on standardized licensure examinations. We have joined LONESTAR and will use their student tracking system to supplement future reporting and research.

Implementation strategy used to foster faculty support

Accrediting entities and funding agencies have formalized accountability requirements for educational institutions. Like other colleges, NMSU-A faced a NCA accreditation site visit in March 1993. At that time, we had no institutional assessment plan, no comprehensive long-range plan, and we did not have an institutional researcher. Fortunately we had visionary leadership to launch a faculty-driven, self-study process which emphasized institutional improvement. By focusing on the question of "how we could do better?" instead of only questioning "what were we doing wrong?", the evaluation aspect inherent in assessment activities was minimized. Beyond the positive emphasis on improvement, a key to the success of the assessment and strategic planning process was that every staff and faculty member and many students had a voice in the process (Leas & Lillibridge, 1994).

Early in the self-study we decided our assessment and planning had to be couched conceptually in our mission and purposes statement. The criteria stressed and evaluated by NCA

provides the umbrella under which our mission and purposes rests. Once this conceptual matrix was developed, the concrete measures of our effectiveness took on more meaning. All employees had an opportunity to help develop the conceptual framework and to visualize their role in the achievement of our mission. Our approach was inclusive. The result was that many more people understand how assessment yields usable information and provides direction for fulfilling our mission (Himebrook, Twomey, Beck, Flores, & Elliott, 1992).

Guided by decisions to 1) focus on improvement, 2) involve every faculty/staff and many students, and 3) be conceptually-driven by our mission and purposes statement, we established the cornerstone committees to launch the assessment and planning effort. The three major committees were: the Self-Study Steering Committee, the Mission and Purposes Review Committee, and the Institutional Assessment Committee. Each committee consisted of personnel from all areas of campus; however, in the spirit of our informally endorsed shared-governance philosophy, over half the membership of each committee was faculty. The chair of two of the committees was a faculty member, and the chair of the Steering Committee was the Associate Provost for Instruction. While all departments on campus had a role in the formulation of the assessment and planning model, the process was faculty-driven. Therefore, the faculty felt they owned the assessment process. As a result, compliance with IASP implementation projects was enthusiastic and the results were impressive.

IASP Changed the Institution and We Changed IASP

The effectiveness of IASP in terms of concrete institutional change has been considerable. The campus has gone from a pre-1990 attitude of "what's assessment?" and "who really needs it?" to the present realization that we may be doing too much assessment. When the Institutional

Assessment Committee did its original review of assessment activity in 1990, they discovered that quite a lot of assessment was being done on campus. Usually, we did not call what we were doing -- assessment -- but it really was!

Most faculty have fully embraced assessment as a legitimate extension of good teaching. Academic assessment varies with each discipline and instructor. While not all assessment activities would be considered as high-level classroom research, many have yielded concrete results and have led to real and positive changes. In the three years since the advent of IASP, our campus has changed. One significant change was the modification of IASP from a one-year cycle to a two-year cycle. This was done to allow more time for assessment and planning and more time for implementation of the resultant strategic plan.

Research that focused on developmental studies disciplines resulted in the adoption of a new pre-college level English curriculum. IASP also showed that learning centers for English and Math needed additional space and staffing. We established a Spanish language laboratory to serve this expanding program. Other assessment projects led to revisions of syllabi and course content. Retention studies have reinforced the notion that not all student groups experience college in the same way. This heightened awareness has allowed student service counselors to work more effectively with at-risk students. The operational timeline of IASP coincides with the budget approval cycle. As a result, IASP promotes the reallocation of campus financial resources. This has included the creation of an Office of Information, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Office of Community Education/Distance Learning, and Office of Grants Coordination. IASP clearly showed that classroom space allocations were not always consistent with instructional needs. It

also allows current issues like the American's with Disabilities Act, Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act, and state funding formula deficiencies to receive greater attention.

Reaction of the faculty and staff to IASP

During the initial phases of IASP, faculty and staff designed and conducted assessments examining such aspects of instruction as student academic achievement, instructor effectiveness, and course content. All programs, all disciplines, and virtually all classes were individually assessed.

The faculty's assessment role has evolved during the past three years. In the early stages of IASP each faculty member assessed each of his or her classes every semester. After a year of assessing all classes, faculty were feeling overwhelmed with the amount of time required to do it well. Some suggested that classroom teaching and preparation was suffering. In Fall 1994 faculty, division heads, and administration decided that too much assessment was taking place. It was concluded that assessment of programs, disciplines, and classes will be done on a rotation basis. The result is that high priority programs will receive the prompt attention they require.

The decision to slow the pace of the ongoing assessment activity required considerable deliberation. Too much assessment might lead to burnout and drive some faculty to settle for "face-compliance" in lieu of "real assessment". We resolved it was possible that by doing less assessment we just might achieve higher quality assessment. The decision could only be made because we had established solid baseline measures during the first IASP cycle.

Beginning in 1995, we adopted a new faculty evaluation document that includes an assessment component. With the guidance of their division head and the support of the institutional researcher, faculty will design one expanded and innovative assessment project each

calendar year. The linkage of the assessment of student academic achievement and faculty evaluation shows the importance NMSU-A places on assessment. We affirm that assessment of teaching and student learning is crucial. However, it should not diminish the emphasis on classroom teaching and preparation.

IASP will be used to comply with SPRE, NCA, etc.

IASP is a very flexible process. It is continually being upgraded and improved. When the 1992 amendments to the Higher Education Act became law, and resultant New Mexico SPRE standards were drafted, it became obvious that NMSU-A was going to face substantial accountability requirements. These requirements added to those previously delineated by NCA accreditation guidelines, the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act, and Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Amendments of 1990 (Public Law 101-392). We realized that we had to do something to manage these often daunting requirements for information and reports. Our goal is to create a structured student outcomes assessment program to comply with "all" external requirements. The IASP committee established an Outcomes Assessment key factor committee to direct this task.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness hired an Outcomes Assessment Coordinator to update the assessment matrixes that were the basis of the ***Development of an Assessment Package for NMSU-Alamogordo, New Mexico***, (1992). This report was the culmination of work done for the NCA self-study. Another important tool was an AACC Special Report, ***Community Colleges: Core Indicators of Effectiveness*** (1994). The goal was to inventory campus assessment efforts and needs. This effort was based on a review of pertinent literature and extended interviews with program and division heads. The result of this work was ***SPRE***

Compliance Matrix (Hawkins, 1995). The matrix is based on our mission and purposes statement and lists significant outcomes and accountability measures associated with external entities. Our approach was to find out:

1) what we could do [the dream],
2) what we should do [accountability and reporting requirements],
3) what we really want to do [whether to ignore the requirement or comply for relevant and meaningful purposes], and
4) what we can do [the reality - money and time issues].

This matrix has served as the basis for development for outcomes assessment data collection instruments, research questions, implementation schedule, and operating procedures. Our work will focus initially on our professional, technical, and vocational programs. The goal is to develop a model/prototype to assess other academic programs.

Summary

The development, implementation, and operation of the IASP process to assess student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness required several years of extensive involvement of administrators, faculty, and staff.

The process has proven to be very effective in driving positive change at NMSU-A. Although the implementation of the IASP process has progressed better than anticipated, the institution has not become complacent. IASP serves as the vehicle to plan and carry out our efforts to comply with New Mexico State Postsecondary Reporting Entity (SPRE), NCA, and other external requirements.

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Attachment B

MAJOR CATEGORIES-SPRE COMPLIANCE MATRIX

NCA CRITERION THREE, "A GUIDE TO SELF-STUDY FOR COMMISSION EVALUATION", 1990-92

New Mexico State University-Alamogordo's Mission & Purposes

Core Indicators, AACC Special Report, "Community Colleges: Core Indicators of Effectiveness", 1994

New Mexico SPRE Standards, Final Draft Standards, September, 1994

NCA CRITERION THREE	NMSU-A'S MISSION & PURPOSES	AACC'S CORE INDICATORS	NEW MEXICO SPRE STANDARDS
A. Student Academic Achievement B. Student Development C. Program Quality D. Faculty Accomplishments E. Research and Development F. Public and Community Service G. Special Constituencies H. Institutional Climate	1. Comprehensive post-secondary education meeting lifelong educational needs 2. Quality education for transfer students 3. Technical/vocational courses & programs meeting occupational needs of community 4. Comprehensive developmental studies program 5. Recruitment, development, retention of competent personnel 6. Assessment of existing programs and purposes 7. Planning, implementation, assessment new programs 8. Financial support and distribution of funds 9. Compliance with statewide articulation 10. Coordination of branch/main campus programs, departments 11. Contribution to cultural activities by sharing resources 12. Community involvement/leadership on part of staff 13. Continued adaptive and versatile approach to meeting educational needs of area 14. Accessible and effective student services programs 15. Assistance to business, industry, governmental agencies 16. Intra campus coordination, communication, cooperation	(a) Student Goal Attainment (b) Persistence (Fall to Fall) (c) Degree Completion Rates (d) Placement Rate in the Work Force (e) Employer Assessment of Students (f) Number and Rate Who Transfer (g) Performance After Transfer (h) Success in Subsequent, Related Course work (I) Demonstration of Critical Literacy Skills (j) Demonstration of Citizenship Skills (k) Client Assessment of Programs and Services (l) Responsiveness to Community Needs (m) Participation Rate in Service Area	(1) Availability of Information (2) Accuracy of Information (3) Ability to Complete Program (4) Satisfactory Academic Progress (5) Maintenance of Records (6) Safety and Health Standards (7) Financial & Administrative Capacity (8) Institution Closure (9) Program Quality and Fees (10) Job and Licensing Information (11) Program Length (12) 600-Hour Programs (13) Institution Owners and Officers (14) Student Complaint Procedures (15) Advertising and Recruitment (16) Tuition Refund Policy (17) Program Success a. Completion/Graduation Rates b. Withdrawal Rates c. Placement Rates d. Pass Rates for Licensure Exams e. Student Enrollment Goals

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A - ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	B - STUDENT DEVELOPMENT	C - PROGRAM QUALITY	D - FACULTY CONTRIBUTION
2. Education for Transfer Students *(f) Number & Rate Who Transfer* *(g) Performance After Transfer* (3) Ability to Complete (4) Maintenance of Records 3. Tech/Voc meeting Occupation Needs *(d) Placement Rate* *(e) Employer Assessment of students* (9) Program Quality and Fees (10) Job/Licensing Info (17) a. Completion Rates c. Placement Rates d. Pass Rates for Licensure Exams 4. Comprehensive Developmental Studies Program Basic Skill Acquisition Academic Deficiency *(h) Success/ Related Work* 3. Ability to Complete	1. Lifelong Educational Needs *(a) Student Goal Attainment* (17) e. Student Enrollment Goals *(m) Participation Rate in the Service Area* 14. Accessible & Effective Student Service Programs	1. Lifelong Educational Needs *(a) Student Goal Attainment* *(b) Persistence* *(c) Degree Completion Rates* (17) a. Completion Rates b. Withdrawal Rates c. Placement Rates d. Pass/Licensure Rates 4. Comprehensive developmental studies *(h) Success in Subsequent Related Work* (3) Ability to Complete 6. Assessment of existing programs *(a) Student Goal Attainment* *(b) Persistence (Fall to Fall)* *(c) Degree Completion Rates* (17) a. Completion Rates b. Withdrawal Rates c. Placement Rates d. Pass/Licensure Rates e. Student Enrollment Goals *(f) Number & Rate Who Transfer* *(g) Performance After Transfer* (3) Ability to Complete (4) Maintenance of Records *(h) Client Assessment/Programs* (9) Program Quality & Fees (10) Job and Licensing Information (11) Program Length (12) 600 Hour Program (14) Student Complaint Procedures (15) Advertising & Recruitment (16) Tuition Refund Policy 7. Plan, implement, assess new prgrms *(e) Employer Assessment of Students* (17) a. Completion Rates c. Placement Rates d. Pass/Licensure Rates e. Student Enrollment Goals *(l) Responsiveness to Community Goals* (17) a. Completion Rates 9. Statewide articulation goals *(f) Number & Rate Who Transfer* *(g) Performance after Transfer* (3) Ability to Complete (17) d. Pass/Licensure Rates 10. Coordination/main campus	5. Development/ Retention of Competent Personnel 11. Contribution to cultural activities by sharing resources *(m) Participation Rate in Service Area* 12. Community involvement/ leadership on part of the staff

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E - RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT	F - COMMUNITY RELATIONS	G - SPECIAL CONSTITUENCY	H - INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE
6. Assessment of existing programs *(a) Student Goal Attainment* (17) e. Student Enrollment Goals *(b) Persistence (Fall to Fall)* (5) Maintenance of Records *(c) Degree Completion Rates* (17) a. Completion Rates b. Withdrawal Rates d. Pass/Licensure Rates *(d) Placement Rate in the Work Force* (17) c. Placement Rates *(e) Employer Assessment of Students* (17) d. Pass/Licensure Rates *(f) Number & Rate Who Transfer* *(g) Performance After Transfer* (3) Ability to Complete (5) Maintenance of Records *(h) Success, Subsequent, Related Course work* (3) Ability to complete *(k) Client Assessment of Programs & Services* (9) Program Quality & Fees (10) Job & Licensing Information (11) Program Length (12) 600 Hour Program (14) Student Complaint Procedures (15) Advertising & Recruitment (16) Tuition Refund Policy *(l) Responsiveness to Community Needs* *(m) Participation Rate In Service Area* 7. Plan, implement, assess new prgms *(e) Employer Assessment of Students* (17) a. Completion Rates c. Placement Rates d. Pass/Licensure Rates e. Student Enrollment Goals *(l) Demonstration of Critical Literacy Skills* *(j) Demonstration of Citizenship Skills* *(l) Responsiveness to Community Needs*	3. Tech/Voc meeting Occupational Needs Determine the needs *(h) Client Assessment of Programs* (9) Program Quality/ Fees (10) Job & Licensing Info (11) Program Length (15) Advertising & Recruitment 11. Contribution to cultural activities by sharing resources *(m) Participation Rate in Service Area* 12. Community involvement/ leadership on part of staff *(l) Responsiveness to Community Needs* 13. Adaptive approach meeting educational area needs *(k) Client Assessment/Programs* (9) Program Quality & Fees (17) e. Student Enrollment Goals *(l) Responsiveness to Community Needs* 15. Assistance to business, industry, governmental agencies Needed programs (l) *Responsiveness to Community Needs* Provided programs *(k) Client Assessment of Programs And Services*	4. Comprehensive developmental studies Deficiency *(h) Success in Subsequent Related work* (3) Ability to complete (4) Satisfactory academic progress *(k) Client Assessment/Programs* (10) Job and Licensing Information (11) Program Length (12) 600 Hour Program (15) Advertising & Recruitment (17) a. Completion Rates b. Placement Rates d. Pass/Licensure Rates e. Student Enroll Goals 13. Adaptive approach meeting educational area needs Satisfy different types *(l) Responsiveness to Community Needs* (17) e. Student Enrollment Goals	4. Comprehensive developmental studies Tutorial Support *(h) Success in Subsequent Related Work* (3) Ability to Complete (4) Satisfactory Academic Progress 5. Recruitment, development, retention of competent personnel 8. Financial support & distribution of funds (7) Financial & Administrative Capacity 10. Coordination of branch/main Campus programs, departments Visit branch Hiring practices Branch representation on Faculty Senate 16. Intra campus coordination, communication, cooperation Communication Committees